



SOUTH GLENS FALLS FIRE COMPANY, INC.

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Mr. Lehman,

This letter is in response to your question regarding the decision to not call Glens Falls Fire Department to the Common Roots fire. Unfortunately, the answer is not a simple one to explain, but I will certainly do my best.

I should start with a quick discussion about the fire that evening. We were dispatched at 7pm EST and were on-scene within minutes. Many of us were in our town station, so apparatus didn't have to wait for manpower to arrive. Dispatch information stated flames were through the roof, indicating the fire had been burning for a significant period already. On arrival, heavy black smoke was found coming from the eaves of the roof on all four corners of the front building. This again indicates that the fire had been burning for a long time and had traveled a significant distance.

Our initial consideration with any structure fire is life hazard. After a quick discussion with staff that were working, we were told everyone, staff and patrons, were out of the building. Crews made a rapid and aggressive interior attack, however the extent of the fire required them to evacuate the structure after a few minutes for their own safety.

Modern fires double in size every thirty seconds. Imagine one trashcan on fire in a building that size. If the fire doubles in size every thirty seconds, in just five minutes, that fire is the size of 1,024 trashcans. Our estimation is that the fire was burning for at least 30 minutes prior to our dispatch, if not longer.

Regarding our mutual aid from other fire companies, Saratoga County Emergency Services just instituted a new mutual aid system called mutual aid box alarm system (MABAS). Under MABAS, types of alarms we respond to are broken down into different dispatch categories. Each dispatch category then has multiple alarm assignments (1st alarm, 2nd alarm, etc.) Each alarm assignment has agencies, and apparatus types predetermined.

The fire at Common Roots was a "Commercial Structure Fire." We went to a 4th alarm for a commercial structure fire that evening, with the following agencies responding as part of those alarm assignments: West Glens Falls Fire Company, Queensbury Central Fire Department, South Queensbury Fire Department, Hudson Falls Fire Department, Fort Edward Fire Department, Moreau EMS, and South Glens Falls Police Department.



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When establishing these box alarm assignments, we requested that Glens Falls Fire be part of our box alarms for any structure fire with entrapment or with a life hazard, however the current dispatch categories set-up by Saratoga County Emergency Services do not differentiate between a structure fire with or without entrapment. Therefore, Glens Falls Fire Department is not part of the commercial structure fire box alarm assignment.

That being said, Glens Falls Fire is a very close resource that can have a quick response. Their response for one engine is a driver, one officer, and one firefighter. That might be enough manpower for making a rescue early on in a structure fire, however firefighting standards dictate more manpower is necessary before making an interior attack on a fire with no life hazard.

Having Glens Falls as an automatic response for every structure fire is hard to justify. It takes resources out of the city they are paid to protect, creating overtime costs to backfill a mutual aid assignment. Additionally, their response comes with limited manpower. Calling volunteer agencies brings resources at virtually no cost, and typically brings more manpower on each apparatus as well. That doesn't mean that we haven't or won't use them. Even with the new MABAS system in place, every member of South Glens Falls Fire has been informed that if needed, life hazard or not, Glens Falls Fire can be requested to any scene.

Considering the totality of the circumstances, the lack of life safety hazard, the extent of the fire at the time of dispatch for Common Roots, etc., it was determined that deploying the Saratoga County Emergency Services MABAS system and leveraging the 7 agencies was the appropriate response.

We remain dedicated to being a pillar for our community as an emergency services organization, and committed to assisting Common Roots as a safety and preventative planning resource as they navigate their next steps.

Respectfully,



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